

**Testimony to the Public Health Committee on Raised Bill No. 5128 – AN ACT
CONCERNING FUNDS APPROPRIATED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES, February 16, 2016**

I would like to thank you, Senator Gerrantana and Representative Ritter for Raising H.B. 5128, and I would like to thank the Co-Chairs and members of the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to speak **in favor of Raised Bill No. 5128 – An Act Concerning Funds Appropriated to the Department of Developmental Services**. My name is Collette Bement Langner. My husband and I live in Tolland with our 29 year old son, Scott, who receives employment services from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Our family was one of the fortunate Wait List Initiative families that qualified for residential funding in April 2014. However, it will be more than 2 ½ years of waiting after residential funding was first allocated to Scott before he can realize his dream to move into the community in September, 2016, and the reason -- so few people have been allocated residential funding from DDS that appropriate roommates were impossible to find. In FY 2015, only eleven people, who were not considered to be “Emergencies”, received funding from DDS for residential services.

The DDS budget has been cut by more than \$50 million in the past 3 years and most of those cuts have come from the community-based Residential or Day & Employment Services. As a result, there are now approximately 100 people on the Day & Employment Services Waiting List, in addition to the more than 2,000 people who have languished on the Waiting List for Residential Services, some waiting for decades. The governor’s proposed budget calls for almost \$50 million in additional cuts to the DDS budget. When will the cuts and rescissions stop? When will the people in the I/DD community get the respect and services that they deserve?

Although Governor Malloy indicated in his budget address to the Legislature that providing community services for the I/DD population is a priority, his cuts to the DDS budget continue. Raised Bill No. 5128 would require that any funding remaining in the DDS budget through savings or lapses not be returned to the General Fund as long as there are DDS clients still waiting for services from DDS. The funding allocated to DDS should remain with DDS to provide services to persons with I/DD. If the I/DD community is truly a priority for Governor Malloy, then DDS funding should remain with the department to provide services for the people who need them!

I would also like to ask that members of the Public Health Committee raise the comprehensive “DDS Family’s Rights Bill” that has been proposed by Representative Demicco. This bill is critically important to families to understand their rights as DDS makes crucial decisions about their family member. Currently most of the significant decisions made by DDS are cloaked in secrecy, with families not allowed to attend or actively participate at meetings where family requests for services are discussed and decided upon. Families are only provided with a negative

or affirmative decision with no details about their request, and sometimes that decision is not even provided in writing. The DDS Family's Rights Bill will establish transparency and communication, where now there is none.